

COMMUNITY NEWS FROM NORTH HERTS COUNCIL



OUTLOOK

NEW SOFT PLAY

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

OUR CLIMATE HIVE

WHAT'S ON



MAKING A SPLASH THIS SUMMER IN

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

SUMMER 2023

www.north-herts.gov.uk

FROM THE LEADER



Welcome to your summer Outlook magazine! As we start another civic year in North Herts, I want to thank everyone, including our staff, volunteers, candidates and councillors who took part in this year's local elections and to you for voting and bringing your photo ID. Your updated Councillor's Directory can be found on page 19.

This summer we're celebrating the first anniversary of our Community Lottery, which has raised £23,790 and supported 40 community groups and organisations across the district. We're committed to supporting our communities, and this year I'm proud that we're going to be launching a Community Wealth Fund (page 7) to support local groups and organisations with projects that have a sustainable and measurable impact on the local community.

We're also celebrating the 20th year of our partnership with the Black Squirrel Credit Union [page 6]. The credit union provides vital, affordable support to people across our community, and is a key partner as we continue easing the squeeze of the cost-of-living crisis.

Cllr Elizabeth Dennis – Leader of the Council

As the weather improves and days get longer, it's time to get outdoors and enjoy our parks, green spaces and interactive play areas. As a keen swimmer, I'm looking forward to taking the plunge at our outdoor pools and enjoying the extended season at Letchworth. If you find yourself in Bancroft Gardens, don't forget to visit our new kiosk (page 15) and enjoy a coffee whilst watching your kids playing in the splash park (one of four across the district).



Cllr Elizabeth Dennis

Photo: Rebecca



Cllr Ruth Brown

We are working hard to reduce our carbon emissions and for North Herts to be net zero by 2040. We can only reach this target by working together and would love you to join our Climate Hive (page 16) and share your ideas for local action.

Our climate change actions include promoting active travel, making it safer and more convenient to walk or cycle. We have outdoor gym equipment and covered cycle racks coming soon to Royston Leisure centre, so why not leave your car at home and enjoy a great open-air workout!?

Cllr Ruth Brown - Deputy Leader

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Your 2023/2024 Councillors

CONTACTING NORTH HERTS COUNCIL

Most North Herts Council services can be accessed online. Find out the date of your next waste collection, apply for a licence, report an issue, register to vote or pay a bill, all through our website: www.north-herts.gov.uk



OTHER WAYS TO CONTACT US:

Phone: 01462 474000

www.facebook.com/northhertsDC

@NorthHertsDC @northhertsdc

north-hertfordshire-district-council

- North Herts Council is committed to equal opportunities and our aim is to make our services easy for all residents to use. If English is not your first language or you have difficulty reading this document please contact us to discuss how we may be able to assist you.

Please call: 01462 474000, or email service@north-herts.gov.uk
Textphone (for textphone users) on: 01462 474800



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“ Putting our people first and delivering sustainable services, to enable a brighter future together. ”



Our North Herts Local Plan

The new Local Plan for North Herts was adopted by Full Council in November 2022. This is an important council document that:

- shows what development is needed in the district until 2031
- explains where this should go
- sets out what areas need to be protected or enhanced
- helps our planning service to decide whether new development is suitable.

The Plan guides all forms of development that need planning permission; from an extension to your home, to the largest new neighbourhoods that are planned around our towns.

Our last Local Plan was adopted in 1996, so it was really important for us to identify how and where we would provide new homes, jobs and facilities for existing and future residents.

Our Plan makes sure that developers will provide affordable housing, new routes for walking and cycling and open spaces on their sites and contribute to infrastructure such as schools, bus services and GPs.

We are now working to deliver the Local Plan which will bring some significant changes to the district in the coming years.

To meet the needs of our community, we aim to build around 9,000 new homes between now

and 2031. Most of these will be delivered on six strategic sites including to the east of Hitchin, north of Letchworth and around Baldock. It also identifies:

- employment sites at Royston and Baldock
- a requirement for developers to provide up to 40% affordable housing on their sites
- new Green Belt to protect the area between Hitchin, Luton, Kimpton & the A505.

Over the next 12 months we will be:

- involving local communities as individual schemes are designed in more detail
- consulting on documents that provide more information on issues such as sustainability and biodiversity
- preparing more detailed plans for our town centres to encourage more people to walk and cycle
- starting work on the next review of the Local Plan that will look forward to the 2040s.

Developments in Baldock

The sites at Baldock are the largest development planned in North Herts. More than 3,000 new homes and supporting employment and infrastructure will be built to the north, east and south-east of the existing town.



We are working with Hertfordshire County Council (the landowner) and Urban & Civic (the developer) to prepare a Masterplan which will set out how the site could be developed. This will ensure the growth around Baldock is planned as a sustainable extension to the town. This will include:

- up to 3,300 homes
- Two primary schools and a secondary school
- A major new employment area along Royston Road
- Significant new green spaces; and
- Extensive walking and cycling routes and sustainable transport investment, including to the station and town centre.

We have recently set up an online Community Forum to make sure we hear the views of key groups and organisations with an interest in the future of Baldock.

Visit: www.growingbaldock.co.uk to keep up to date with plans to grow Baldock and have your say.

More information on the Local Plan is available on our website: www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning-policy





Since the last edition of Outlook magazine, many of you have given us your thoughts in two consultations we've run: **The Churchgate Shopping Centre in Hitchin and Community Safety in North Herts.**

We thought we'd take the opportunity to update you on the views you've kindly shared with us and update you on where we are now with both initiatives.



Thanks to everyone who completed our initial survey about the future of the Churchgate Shopping Centre in Hitchin. We received almost 2000 responses which will really help shape the future of the project. Using the findings, we are now able to identify key themes and develop a collective vision – created by the community, led by North Herts Council – to help us achieve a favourable outcome for everyone. The key themes will be built into our future plan and will incorporate as many of your views as possible.

We are pleased to report that 'conserving Hitchin Market' was the most common theme throughout the data set. Hitchin Market has been serving the town since 1221, managed by Hitchin Markets Limited, who can be found within the Hitchin BID office. The Market offers a variety of stalls from fresh fruit and veg to unique handmade crafts and even a Barbers!

We would like to see more of our residents (and visitors!) shopping there and utilising this unique asset that our market town has to offer. Keep up to date with the latest stalls, traders and events at the market by following **@hitchinmarkets** on Instagram or visiting **www.hitchinmarkets.co.uk**.

Other themes identified in the survey results were a desire for more retail and dining offerings and creating a lively, vibrant location, in-keeping with Hitchin's architectural style.

We'll be sharing further updates about Churchgate in future editions of Outlook and wanted to thank everyone who took the time to give us their ideas as they will help us shape the vision for the Churchgate Shopping area of Hitchin.

We're just at the start of this process and welcome any ideas you have. We can't promise we'll be able to do everything, but your ideas will help us shape the vision for this exciting development for North Herts.



Community safety and your priorities

North Herts remains one of the lowest crime areas in Hertfordshire and we asked you for your priorities and concerns when it comes to North Herts remaining a safe place to live, work and visit in the future.

Thanks to those who responded to our community safety survey earlier in the year. It was great to see that nearly 80% of you agree or strongly agree that North Herts is a safe place to live, work, and visit – it is! Although 88% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis will have an impact on crime levels in the district.

The council is a major partner in the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (CSP) alongside local police, fire, probation and NHS services, which all work together to reduce crime and disorder in the area. There are also smaller working groups within the CSP to address specific local priorities.



As with previous years we know from the survey results that your concerns and priorities for the coming year are anti-social behaviour (including criminal damage and vehicle nuisance); violence against women and girls (including domestic abuse, stalking and harassment) and current and emerging issues such as theft and scams, but this will vary as we go through the year.

The district remains one of the lowest crime areas in the county but we are not complacent. We'll continue to combine what residents say with crime data and statistics so we can allocate our resources accordingly. By working together and using a multi-agency approach we hope to be able to tackle your concerns and make you feel even safer.

KEEP IN TOUCH



We'd love to hear your views and keep you informed on the progress of future projects and next steps on services.

Have your say on future decisions for your community and be the first to hear about potential new projects in the district, by signing up today at www.north-herts.gov.uk/haveyoursay

Thank you. We look forward to hearing from you in the future.



Council meetings

Please check our website for details of upcoming council meetings: www.north-herts.gov.uk/meetings

You can also find out more by:



Calling: Customer Services on **01462 474000**

Visiting: your local library to use their computer



Monthly Community surgeries

Come and meet your local councillors at our monthly community surgeries. Ask for advice, tell us your views and enquire about local authority services.

Hitchin:

10.30 – 12noon, first Saturday, Town Square, Hitchin.

Royston:

10–11.30am, second Saturday, every other month, Royston Market Hill Car Park by Carlos Barbers

Letchworth:

10.30 – 12noon, third Saturday, Garden Square Shopping Centre.

Baldock:

10.30 – 12noon, last Saturday, Tesco, High Street, Baldock.



Help this summer

The latest from our cost of living campaign, **Easing the squeeze**:



Black Squirrel Credit Union supports efforts to tackle homelessness



Food provision

As well as local food banks, there are a number of community pantries and cafés in North Herts that offer 'rescued' food – items that are perhaps past their best but still perfectly edible or just surplus to requirements. So you can grab some cheap grub and feel good about saving food from landfill.



School summer holiday help

The Hertfordshire Holiday Activity Programme, aka 'HAPpy Activity Camps', is run by Herts Sports Partnership for children and young people who attend a local school and are in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. They provide healthy food and fun activities during the main school holidays.



'Warm' spaces turn into 'Welcome' spaces

As the weather improves, some churches, community centres and facilities will continue to open their doors as welcome spaces for anyone to attend. Previously known as 'warm spaces' to save you from putting your heating on, they provide a range of services including a quiet place to sit, board games and if the weather gets hot some might have air conditioning!



Stay online and connected

With money tight, your broadband and phone might be something you consider doing away with – but there is support to lower your broadband and telecoms contracts. Firstly, are you out of contract? Ofcom reports that millions of people are out of contract for their phone, broadband and pay-TV, so could get a better deal. Additional help is also available for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits, but a significant amount of people eligible for these tariffs don't take advantage of them. There are a number of comparison sites which Ofcom accredits to help you make an informed choice and get the right deal.



www.north-herts.gov.uk/squeeze for more detail on the above and lots more cost of living help and advice.

Black Squirrel Credit Union Ltd



Credit unions provide ethical financial services at reasonable cost to individuals and small businesses, meaning you can save money safely and borrow money affordably. In 2022, Black Squirrel Credit Union (BSCU) based in Letchworth and Royston, celebrated 20 years of supporting the North Herts community.

A community bank for everyone, BSCU is owned and run by its members. The nearly £1m saved by its over 1,000 members means that a similar amount is loaned to members at time of need.

One crucial part of BSCU's work is its partnership with North Herts Council to prevent homelessness. Residents referred by the council receive financial help to secure accommodation.

During the current cost-of-living crisis, BSCU is able to make a difference as their team of volunteers respond quickly to members, discussing options and paying agreed loans speedily.

If you think you could benefit from BSCU's help, give them a call on **01462 613060**, email them on **info@bscu.org.uk** or visit their website: **www.bscu.org.uk**.



MONEY MATTERS

COUNCIL TAX

Did you know in every pound you pay, we get 12p. The rest goes to Hertfordshire County Council (76.6%) and the police (11.4%).

This year also sees the introduction of our new council tax reduction scheme, meaning that the lowest income households in the district will not pay any council tax at all.

Here's some examples of what the scheme could mean for you.

A single person with an income up to £100 per week, or a couple with two children on a weekly income below £260, will be entitled to the full 100% council tax relief. In addition, some families with an income below £515 a week will also be eligible for some support. The scheme for pension age residents is set by the government and has not changed.

The council has written to anyone affected by the new scheme.

INVESTING IN OUR DISTRICT

As well as providing our core services, such as recycling and waste, street cleaning, planning, leisure and greenspace, this year our budget also incorporates some exciting projects across the district, including:

£100k for the creation of a Community Wealth Fund which will be open to bids from local groups for projects that have a sustainable and measurable impact on the local area.

£720k for solar panels at North Herts Leisure Centre in Letchworth, Royston Leisure Centre and Hitchin Swim Centre to help reduce carbon emissions and save money.

£250k to renovate the skatepark at King George V Recreation Ground in Hitchin, and **£100k** to renovate and improve access to the skatepark at Newmarket Road in Royston.

£400k for the refurbishment of Charnwood in Hitchin, the former Museum site, into a community hub.

How every £1 of council tax is spent in North Herts



46p Waste collection & street cleaning



22p Looking after parks & green spaces



10p Environmental health: protecting your work, your health & your life



8p Housing advice & homelessness support



2p Community safety & Environmental crime



8p North Herts Museum & Hitchin Town Hall



4p Grants to community organisations, including area committee grants

The chance to **WIN BIG** while helping your community
It's a win-win!



North Herts
Community
Lottery

www.northhertscommunitylottery.co.uk

GET EXCITED FOR SUMMER

Make memories at Hitchin and Letchworth outdoor pools this summer! Both centres offer 50 metre and toddler pools, splash cafes and picnic areas. Plus, take advantage of Hitchin's later Tuesday evening sessions and Letchworth's longer season!



Celebrate with us
85 Years
1938-2023



HITCHIN SWIMMING CENTRE

swimming
memberships
available



LETCHWORTH OUTDOOR POOL

season
tickets
available





Splash into summer and enjoy swimming at our outdoor pools

We are blessed in North Herts to have not one, but two stunning outdoor pools, located in Hitchin and Letchworth so you can make the most of the summer.

Swimming is great for the whole family, whether you want to take an early morning dip and swim a few lengths, or come along with the family, both locations have 50 metre

and toddler pools and are open throughout the season. Hitchin has a late session on a Tuesday evening and Letchworth will stay open until the 24th September this season.

Hitchin pool is also celebrating its 85th birthday year, so do come along and make some memories like many families have done since it opened! Or if perhaps you have a special occasion to celebrate this year, the pools can be hired for private functions or pool parties!

Both outdoor pools are heated and the smaller toddler pools are perfect for those families with younger children. There are also grassed areas for sunbathing and cafes that provide refreshments and snacks. Everyone is welcome, with a range of concessions for families, multi-swim tickets and membership options.

Swimming is great for the whole family, whether you want to take an early morning dip and swim a few lengths, or come along with the family,



Soft Play comes to Letchworth

New to North Herts Leisure Centre this summer is 'Play Wild Letchworth', a dedicated soft play area perfect for children with plenty of fun with different levels to keep them occupied.

Hours of entertainment await kids of all ages with a range of fun and physical activities including monkey bars, cargo nets, rope bridge, log ramp climber and small and large slides.

There is an integrated café and viewing area as well as provision for parties. The new facility will help increase usage at the leisure centre and therefore generate additional income for the site, aiding the financial recovery of our leisure facilities after the Covid pandemic.



Go to www.north-herts.gov.uk/playwild for all the details

Community wellbeing days

from the North Herts Healthy Hub

INCLUDING FREE REFRESHMENTS

Hitchin at 9.30am

Christchurch

Bedford Road, Hitchin, SG5 1HF

Fun with food with the Creative Chefs now running every month in Hitchin at Christchurch

21 Jul
Suitable for under 5s

18 Aug
Suitable for children aged 10 and under

29 Sept
Suitable for under 5s



Letchworth at 9.30am

Mrs Howard Memorial Hall

Norton Way South, Letchworth Garden City SG6 1NX

11 Jul - Adult craft session – join us for an introduction to felting (suitable for beginners)

25 Jul - Children's craft session with the Creation Station (suitable for children aged 10 and under)

8 Aug - A wild session learning about exotic animals with Safari Stu (suitable for children aged 10 and under)

22 Aug - Children's Craft session with the Art in Martins (suitable for children aged 10 and under)

5 Sept - Beginners taster Yoga for adults

19 Sept - Being Assertive for adults with Mind in Mid Herts



Knebworth at 10am

St Martin's Parish Centre

St Martin's Road, Knebworth, SG3 6ER

6 Jul - Movement and music for under 5s

20 Jul - Card making for adults

10 Aug - Children's craft session with the Creation Station (suitable for children aged 10 and under)

24 Aug - A wild session learning about exotic animals with Safari Stu (suitable for under 10s)

7 Sept - Adult craft session. Join us for an introduction to felting (suitable for beginners)

21 Sept - Low impact physical activity session for adults



Royston at 10am

Market Hill Rooms

Fish Hill, Royston SG8 9DW

5 Jul - Fun with food for under 5s with Creative Chefs

19 Jul - Being Assertive for adults with Mind in Mid Herts

2 Aug - Children's crafts session with the Creation Station (suitable for children aged 10 and under)

16 Aug - Fun with food with the Creative Chefs (suitable for children aged 10 and under)

30 Aug - A wild session learning about exotic animals with Safari Stu (suitable for children aged 10 and under)

20 Sept - Movement and music for under 5s with Little Performers

27 Sept - Pottery painting for adults with Glazed Creations



www.healthyhubnorthherts.co.uk

Numbers are limited so must be pre-booked by emailing healthyhub@north-herts.gov.uk or calling 01462 474111

Keep an eye on our social media channels for news of next year's awards!

OUR NORTH HERTS HEROES

Congratulations to the five winners of this year's North Herts Heroes!

Sam North, Former Cllr, previous Chair of the Council, said: "These awards are an important opportunity for us to recognise and celebrate some of the special people in the district who go out of their way to make a positive impact on other people. We are delighted to recognise the hard work, dedication and sheer community spirit of Tracey, Colin, Glyn, Laraine, and Keeley."

Caring Award

Tracey goes out of her way to help and support rough sleepers in Letchworth town centre, establishing a rapport and real bond with them. Tracey also helps the volunteers at the charity shop she works at who have special needs.

Dedication Award

Colin has served the village of Ickleford for 47 years, the majority of which as a parish councillor.

He has been fundamental to a number of successes including establishing Ickleford Sport and Recreation Club and securing the five-acre burial ground 'Alleyfield' to enable local people to be laid to rest in the village.

Green Award

Glyn has been the backbone of Plastic Free Letchworth and manages the Terracycle plastic recycling schemes at Morrisons in Letchworth for hard to recycle plastics. Glyn volunteers at Wilbury Café which is a hub for multiple community initiatives including pre-loved school uniform and food rescue. Glyn has also run the local NCT outdoor playgroup for about eight years.

Health Award

Laraine (who unfortunately couldn't attend the ceremony) has been

a community first responder for the East of England Ambulance Service in Royston for eight years, vitally attending the most urgent 999 calls within her local rural community 24/7, to assist before an ambulance arrives. Laraine leads the Royston teams alongside a fulltime job, and also fundraises for equipment.

Young Star

Keeley has been fundraising since she was five years old, raising around £15,000! This year, she raised money for 15 different charities by singing for an hour every month on Facebook, and in 2021 she raised a similar amount by doing 50 squats a day during February. She is due to get her long hair cut for charity for the fourth time in October, having donated a total length of 5'7" to the Princess Trust so far.



Award winners pictured left to right with Sam North, former Cllr and previous Chair of the Council Tracey Hilton, Keeley Thomas, Glyn Holt and Colin Thurstance

WASTE & RECYCLING



Join the plastic free revolution this July

Plastic Free July is a global movement urging everyone to limit their use of single-use plastic. It's all about reducing, reusing and recycling what we do use.

The problem with plastic is that it's derived from fossil fuels and much of it, especially single-use plastic such as drink bottles, carrier bags and takeaway containers, if not sent for recycling ends up being incinerated – its production and disposal emits millions of tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, contributing to climate change. In addition, plastic doesn't biodegrade, it breaks down into micro particles that could contaminate our environment, with microplastics polluting our water and wildlife and even our food.

What can you do?

Even small changes can make a big difference – giving up one to three items of single-use plastic, even for a month, will have an impact:

Use a refillable water bottle rather than buying bottled water and take a reusable cup if you go out for a coffee. You can refill your water bottle at lots of places (check out the Refill app) including water fountains in our parks and leisure facilities:

- Avenue Park, Baldock
- Bancroft Park, Hitchin
- Hitchin Outdoor Swimming Pool
- Letchworth Outdoor Swimming Pool
- North Herts Leisure Centre, Letchworth
- Priory Memorial Gardens, Royston.

Did you know period products can contain 90% fossil fuel-based plastic? There are lots of benefits to sustainable period products – they'll save you money and are better for you and the planet. Or perhaps you have a child in nappies? Did you know avoiding just one day of disposable nappies saves around 17 plastic bags worth of plastic! Switching to reusable nappies is easy, sustainable and needn't cost the earth – Hertfordshire residents get 15% discount on both schemes.

How are we doing our bit to reduce plastic?

In 2019, we declared a climate emergency and are committed to become carbon neutral by 2030, as well as become a net zero carbon district by 2040. We follow a Climate Change Strategy and action plan and specifically around plastic we:

- have reduced single-use plastic from our leisure centres, for example, swapping blue plastic overshoes for flip flops, and if you use a reusable cup in one of our leisure centre cafés we'll top it up to large for free!
- swapped disposable cups to glassware at the council offices and Hitchin Town Hall.
- installed more recycling bins in our parks and high streets so you can also recycle plastic on the go.



GARDEN WASTE SIGN-UP

Now summer is here, you might find yourself gardening more than usual. If you haven't yet signed up to the council's fortnightly garden waste collection service, you can do so via our website: www.northhertsgardenwaste.co.uk



Take the #WorthSaving Food Waste Challenge

A campaign to reduce the amount of food thrown away unnecessarily – saving up to £720 a year – is offering you the chance to win a free meal out if you take part.

The #WorthSaving campaign aims to tackle the issue of avoidable food waste by encouraging residents to reduce food waste and save money by developing better habits.

To find out more and enter the prize draw, visit www.wasteaware.org.uk/worthsaving

You'll receive weekly hints and guidance on how to reduce your food waste.

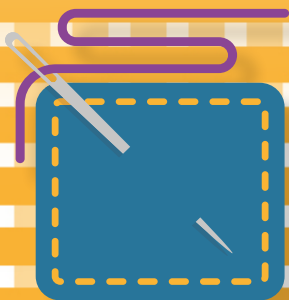


How to recycle your textiles



There are lots of ways you can donate or recycle your textiles to ensure they don't end up in your refuse bin:

- Donate to your local charity shop
- Charity collection banks, find your nearest here: www.recyclenow.com/recycling-locator
- Some retailers offer instore textile collections, some even give you a discount on purchases for making a donation
- Sell your unwanted clothes via sites such as eBay, Vinted or Facebook Marketplace
- Some schools collect textiles to raise funds for equipment
- Your local recycling centre
- Local animal sanctuaries or rescue centres may want old towels and bedding
- Look out for bags posted through your letter box asking for donations, do check where the textiles are going before placing these out for collection
- Consider repairing, repurposing, or upcycling garments. There are lots of resources online that can show you how to do basic repairs such as replacing buttons, hemming, and replacing zips.



Changes to bin collections coming in 2025



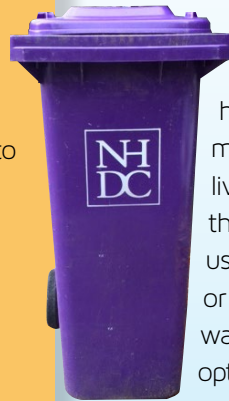
The following new collection arrangements are due to come into effect in spring 2025 when our current contract with Urbaser ends.

Refuse collections

Your refuse bin used for general waste will be collected once every three weeks. This will help reduce the council's carbon emissions, encourage more recycling, and reduce pressure on our budgets in the current landscape of rising energy and other costs.

We'll still collect your food waste every week and recycling every fortnight.

We know some households might need more support, such as those living in larger households, those with multiple children using disposable nappies, or people with other special waste needs, and we will have options in place to help them.



Plastic bags

We will start accepting soft plastic such as plastic bags in 2025. We will also start taking plastic film/wrap often, known as soft plastic, in your grey recycling bin from 2025, which will greatly reduce the volume of waste we send to landfill. The only current option for most residents is to use supermarket drop-off points.

Moving soft plastics into the recycling will free up a lot of space in your refuse bin to accommodate the extra week.



Keep an eye on our social channels for more information as we count down to 2025.

Did you know you can 'adopt' your local area to help keep it litter free? This can be your street, neighbourhood or even dog walking route.

Adopting your area means that you are providing your area with some extra love and attention and keeping it litter free. Our usual street cleansing operations will continue as normal.

All you need to do is tell us what area you would like to cover and how regularly you think you might litter pick it (this will give us an idea

about the amount of litter you might be collecting).

We will then provide you with a litter picking pack (subject to availability) which includes a litter picker, a high vis vest, a guide to safe litter picking and litter picking bags. We can provide you with the sacks and remove the litter on your refuse collection day.

To adopt an area, complete this application form on our webpage: www.north-herts.gov.uk/adopt-area



ADOPT AN AREA





As we step into summer, there's been lots going on in our greenspaces across the district:

New trim trail at King George V Recreation Ground

A new 'trim trail' has been installed at the park in Hitchin. A trim trail is an obstacle course of fun, physical challenges, testing balance and agility, designed for children to get from the beginning to end – but of course they can play however they like!

Other facilities at King George Rec include a floodlit multi-use game area, exercise zone, football and rugby pitches, tennis court and a skatepark which is due a £250k renovation this year.



Rainbow bench shines across Hitchin

With some benches needing to be replaced, and North Herts Pride keen to install a rainbow bench at Windmill Hill, it was agreed that the group could custom one of the new replacements. The late Cllr Judi Billing, district and county councillor, awarded some of her Hertfordshire County Council locality budget for the bench to have a makeover to represent LGBT+ communities.

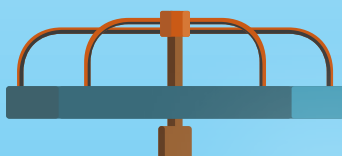
The bench will be a focal point for 'Katie's Picnics' a regular community get-together at Windmill Hill where everyone is welcome.

100 trees replaced across district

About 100 trees have been planted across North Herts as part of our tree replacement programme. Unfortunately due to the extreme hot weather last year, many trees failed to establish and needed to be replaced. The trees will be supported by a program of maintenance over the next two years including irrigation to ensure their best chances of success.



About 100 trees have been planted across North Herts as part of our tree replacement programme.





Grab a coffee at the Bancroft Kiosk

Treat yourself to drinks, ice creams and light snacks from our new kiosk in Bancroft Recreation Ground in Hitchin this summer. Sip on a freshly brewed coffee from our Bancroft Kiosk whilst watching the kids playing in the splash park (one of four across the district). You can take away or sit in the triangular courtyard next to the kiosk within the lovely gardens. Four-legged friends are also catered for, with free dog treats and the all-important water bowl!

Hot and cold soft drinks and ice cream are now available from our Bancroft Kiosk in Bancroft Recreation Ground in Hitchin.

Contractors John O’Conner take a walk on the wild side

The council’s grounds maintenance contractor John O’Conner had a day out recently learning about our ‘wilding’ programme, which aims to reduce carbon emissions and increase biodiversity to fight climate change. The training included a session at Norton Common in Letchworth looking at different landscape examples and their importance to wildlife. The council’s Greenspace team also attended the event which was delivered by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.



New toddler play area in Great Ashby

Working with Groundwork East, we have refurbished the play area for toddlers – a new musical station with xylophone and bongo drums has been added along with a specific toddler timber swing with flowers and a custom-made curved bench. Great Ashby District Park is a fabulous greenspace for local people (and dogs!), with a wide range of play equipment, ‘trim trail’ outdoor gym apparatus, picnic tables, ancient woodlands as well as meadows to provide important habitats for wildlife.



Join our Climate Hive

Want to know how we are tackling climate change in North Herts? Keen to share ideas and activities to help make the district more sustainable?

We really need local residents to help us meet our climate targets to be net zero in our operations by 2030 and for North Herts to be net zero by 2040.

Our Climate Hive also hosts a timeline of action, community events map and dates of meetings, and project updates including monthly water resources report.

We'd love to know how you're living more sustainably to help tackle climate change.

Just sign up to our Climate Hive to stay informed, get involved and share your ideas:

www.north-herts.gov.uk/climatehive



Some people have already shared how they live more sustainably:

"I'm letting areas of my garden go wild so the soil stays covered as much as possible to reduce evaporation. I eat mainly plant-based food so almost all of my food waste (what little there is) is composted and reused in the garden."

"I take my reusable coffee cup and water bottle with me everywhere and don't use single use bottles or cups."

"We're planting trees and hedges to try and mitigate against destruction and loss of habitat caused by release of greenbelt for building. We're also managing grassland to encourage biodiversity."

Wormery winner

Congratulations go to Paul Bichener from St Ippolyts who won a composting wormery and children's book, as part of our climate work and International Compost Week celebrations in May.

Ten runners up also won a bag of 'Ace of Herts' compost from Cumberlows, the product of residents' food waste!

The free prize draw was organised by Herts author, Polly Owen, whose children's book 'Darwin's Super-Pooping Worm Spectacular' has been featured in national newspapers and selected as a 'best book' by teachers' blogs. Illustrated by Gwen Millward, the book highlights the importance of earthworms on our planet, telling the story of how Charles Darwin discovered the power of earthworms' poo when he studied them 150 years ago

and declared them to be one of the most important creatures on the planet!

The composting wormery, worth £95 and kindly supplied by Hitchin based company Original Organics, is an environmentally friendly way to turn food and garden waste into 'vermicompost', which is compost made by worms.

Worms and bees, in fact all nature, is so important to our ecosystem and the way we live. Protecting our natural world and improving biodiversity is our strongest natural defence against climate change.

Author Polly said:
"I loved what the council did last year with promoting the importance of bees and encouraging wildflowers, and wanted to do something similar with highlighting worms, as without them there would be no soil for flowers to grow!"



COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM COUNCIL GRANTS



A number of local groups across North Herts have recently benefitted from our grant schemes:

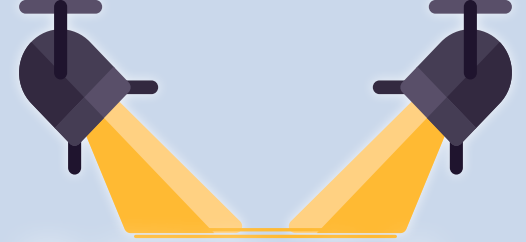
- **Kimpton Folk Events**
£750 towards providing free entertainment at Kimpton Folk Festival
- **Cambridge Russian School**
£777 to run social and English language sessions for Ukrainians in Royston
- **Buzzworks** £932 for equipment for their educational sessions to raise awareness about the importance of bees to the environment
- **Letchworth Garden Shed**
£1,160 to help launch their 'Library of things' allowing local residents and groups to borrow a wide range of items at a nominal price such as a hedge trimmer, jet washer, gazebo, projector and popcorn maker!

- **Headway Hertfordshire**
£1,500 towards group sessions to support those over 18 affected by an acquired brain injury in Baldock
- **Holwell Pavilion** £50,000 (through a community facility capital grant) and £1,211 towards chairs, tables, cooker and fridge/freezer

Small community grants are available from the five area forums. For further information please visit www.north-herts.gov.uk/grants

Brian King from Kimpton Folk Events said: "The council's generous help will support our ongoing mission to nurture talented young musicians and introduce folk music and traditions to the widest possible audience."

Angela Bell from Letchworth Garden Shed said: "We're thrilled to receive this support. We've seen that having a library of things in a town means everyone has the option to borrow the things they need, or that they'd enjoy, without spending a lot of money, and we think Letchworth deserves a really great one of its own."



RURAL spotlight

fly-tipping



As well as the usual white goods, mattresses, furniture and builders' waste, North Herts seems to be a hot spot for more unusual fly-tipping, including frozen chicken, empty corrosive chemical containers and cooking oil barrels. One fly-tipper made a right pig's ear of getting rid of their waste appropriately, by just dumping bags of the swine body part, commonly used as a dog treat, on the side of a road.

We are doing all we can to prevent fly-tipping, but can't possibly patrol the whole of the district's countryside 24/7. We use our limited resources to tackle it, including searching the rubbish for evidence of the perpetrators and clearing it away or requesting the landowner removes it if it's on private land.

If there is sufficient evidence, we also take offenders to court and recently won a case against a man who had arranged for someone without a licence to take his waste. He was fined £1,000 (reduced to £500 in lieu of an unrelated punishment) and other costs totalling £1,354. We have also recently issued a Luton man with a £400 fine.

If you witness fly-tipping or think you may have dashcam footage of any incidents, please contact the council immediately on **01462 474000** or online: www.north-herts.gov.uk/report-problem

You can find out if someone is registered to carry your waste by searching the Environmental Agency's Register: www.environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers

Sport for Social Change

If you live in the Jackmans area of Letchworth, we're bringing you new opportunities to take part in physical activity thanks to an innovative partnership between the council, Herts Sport Partnership and Active in the Community - a not-for-profit organisation that provides community activities on behalf of Local Authorities.

Over 50 and enjoy cycling?

We are excited to announce that Forever Cycling, a brand new initiative for over 50s, has launched in Letchworth, providing users with a virtual cycling experience around some of the world's most iconic locations.

The project has run for a year in Hertfordshire with great success, helping to increase physical activity levels and combat social isolation and loneliness.

Classes are £2 a session and run at the Jackmans Community Centre every Friday from 2-3pm. Spaces can be booked by emailing Joshua.hardy@aitc.org.uk or call **07496 829283**.

Each session will include two routes with a coffee and cake break in between. All equipment will be provided.

Opportunities Fund

Active local is a scheme designed to tackle inequalities and reduce inactivity in areas with the most

deprivation across Hertfordshire. Active Local areas will benefit from a brand new Opportunities Fund that provides funding to support children and young people from the Jackmans area to participate in sport at local clubs. Applications need to be made by the sports clubs and can support young people with up to £200 towards membership fees, clothing or equipment. Keep an eye out on our social channels for more information.



Are you ready for summer?

As our climate changes, hot spells are expected to be more frequent and more intense. The heat-health alert system operates in England from 1 June to 15 September each year. During this period, the Met Office may forecast heatwaves so before hot weather arrives think about what you can do to protect yourself and your family and friends from heat.



Look out for those around you – when the temperature increases it can affect any of us, but in particular young children, older people, those with underlying health conditions and people who are exposed to high levels of heat because of where they live or work.

Keep an eye on any four-legged friends – particularly dogs, who are especially at risk of over-heating.

Take the worry out of summer storms – storms can affect our power and mobile phone networks, so keep key documents, information and a torch in a safe place. The power cut helpline number is 105 and people in vulnerable circumstances can sign up to the UK Power Networks Priority Services Register.

Plan ahead for flooding – keep track of Met Office weather warnings and sign up for flood warnings at www.gov.uk.



For more advice and guidance please visit www.metoffice.gov.uk



Join our Climate Hive... See page 16

Your North Hertfordshire Councillors 2023 / 24

Arbury Tom Tyson (LD)	Baldock East Juan Cowell (C)	Baldock Town Alistair Willoughby (L&C) <small>Executive Member for Community and Partnerships</small>	Baldock Town Michael Muir (C)
Baldock Town Michael Weeks (C)	Cadwell Louise Peace (LD)	Chesfield Terry Tyler (LD)	Chesfield Dominic Griffiths (LD)
Codicote Ian Moody (C)	Ermine Gerald Morris (C)	Hitchin Bearton Ian Albert (L&C) <small>Executive Member For Finance and IT</small>	Hitchin Bearton Val Bryant (L&C)
Hitchin Bearton Dave Winstanley (L&C)	Hitchin Highbury Raj Bhakar (LD)	Hitchin Highbury Sam Collins (LD)	Hitchin Highbury Keith Hoskins MBE (LD) <small>Executive Member For Enterprise And Arts</small>
Hitchin Oughton Clare Billing (L&C)	Hitchin Oughton Nigel Mason (L&C)	Hitchin Priory Chris Lucas (LD)	Hitchin Priory Richard Thake (C)
Hitchin Walsworth James Denselow (L&C)	Hitchin Walsworth Elizabeth Dennis (L&C) <small>Leader of the Council</small>	Hitchin Walsworth Daniel Wright-Mason (L&C)	Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo David Barnard (C)
Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo Faye S Frost (C)	Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo Claire Strong (C)	Kimpton Ralph Muncer (C)	Knebworth Mandi Tandi (C)
Knebworth Lisa Nash (LD)	Letchworth East Tamsin Thomas (L&C)	Letchworth East Ian Mantle (L&C)	Letchworth Grange Daniel Marsh (L&C)
Letchworth Grange Simon Bloxham (C)	Letchworth Grange Daniel Allen (L&C)	Letchworth South East Sean Nolan (L&C)	Letchworth South East Mick Debenham (L&C)
Letchworth South East David Levett (C) <small>Conservative Group Leader</small>	Letchworth South West Phil Weeder (LD)	Letchworth South West Terry Hone (C)	Letchworth South West Sean Prendergast (LD) <small>Executive Member For Housing And Environmental Health</small>
Letchworth Wilbury Tom Plater (L&C)	Letchworth Wilbury Amy Allen (L&C) <small>Executive Member For Recycling And Waste Management</small>	Royston Heath Bryony May (LD)	<p>North Herts Council comprises</p> <p>Labour and Co-operative 19</p> <p>Liberal Democrats 15</p> <p>Conservative 15</p>
Royston Heath Ruth Brown (LD) <small>Executive Member for Planning And Transport & Deputy Leader of the Council</small>	Royston Meridian Matt Barnes (LD)	Royston Meridian Adam Compton (C)	
Royston Palace Gaihy Brownjohn (L&C)	Royston Palace Chris Hinchiff (L&C)	Weston and Sandon Steve Jarvis (LD) <small>Executive Member For Environment And Leisure</small>	

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis is Leader of the Council & Labour and Cooperative Group Leader

Councillor Ruth Brown is Deputy Leader of the Council and Liberal Democrat Group Leader

Councillor Daniel Allen is Chair of the Council

Councillor Chris Lucas is Vice-Chair of the Council

To email your councillor -
frankie.somers@north-herts.gov.uk

For more information on your Councillors, please:

 Visit www.north-herts.gov.uk/your-councillors

 Call Customer Services on 01462 474000

 Visit your local library to use free computer

WHAT'S ON

this Summer

EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE MUSEUM

17 June 1pm - 4pm **Portrait drawing for beginners - Art classes at the Museum**

Improve your skills in drawing people's faces with an experienced art teacher who will guide you through how to draw a well-proportioned face and use art pencils to their full effect.

24 June - 26 August **The World of Peter Rabbit™ Storytime Trail**

This walk-through experience allows visitors to immerse themselves in the Tale of Peter Rabbit. Little bunnies will be able to crawl under the garden gate, hide in a watering can, and see their reflection in a mirror pool, just like Peter Rabbit. No booking required



HITCHIN TOWN HALL

7 July 8pm - 1am **Summer Party – Club Classics**

Hitchin Town Hall are kicking off the summer season with an evening of club classics and 90's/00's dance tracks.

30 July – 11:30am – 3:30pm **Drag Brunch**

Grab a glass of Prosecco and some food from our buffet before enjoying a fun-fuelled afternoon with comedy, bingo and all-round entertainment from Flick the Drag Queen.

www.wegotickets.com
to book now

HITCHIN

24 June - 10am - 4pm **Hidden Hitchin**

Support some amazing businesses by visiting their pop-up stalls. Get to know more about the businesses, their brand, their products, and services.

1 July - 10am - 4pm **Chalking Churchgate**

Hitchin BID and Tim's Art supplies bring you an art competition for all ages. Design your own A4 grid with chalk with prizes for winners!

8 August - 28 August - 10am - 4pm

Hitchin beach returns!

Head to the market place with the kids and their buckets and spades to play in the sand and have fun on rides.

26 - 27 August – 6pm – 9pm **Beach Bar**

A new addition to the yearly beach for 18+ year olds. Bridgetown Monroe will be bringing their pop-up bar so you can enjoy a tasty drink with your toes in the sand.

www.hitchinherts.com/events
for all the details



LETCWORTH

Standalone Farm, Wilbury Road, SG6 4JN

24 - 28 July **Miniature Garden Workshop**

31 July - 4 August **Creepy Critters**



7 - 11 August **Space Dome**

14 - 18 August **Forest School**



21 - 25 October **The Jungle Book Show**

Go to www.standalonefarm.com/whats-on for all the details

Broadway Cinema & Theatre, Eastcheap, SG6 3DD

Friday 23 June 19.30 **and Saturday 24 June 14.30, 19.30** **SPADS presents Legally Blonde The Musical**

Saturday 1 July 20.00 **The Best in Comedy**

Thursday 6 July 11.00 **The Arts Society Lecture: Medieval Animals- Loved and Feared**

www.broadway-lethworth.com/cinema/whats-on to book

BALDOCK

Baldock Heritage Centre

Sunday 2 July 10.30am **Children's Puppet Show**

To book tickets - www.ticketsource.co.uk/baldockartsandheritagecentre

ROYSTON

Summer Solstice at Royston Cave 2023 - 21 June – **See times on website**

Experience the longest day of the year at one of Britain's most unique attractions and bask in the cave's energy. To book - www.roystoncave.co.uk.

29 September to 1 October **Royston Arts Festival**

This year's theme is "Force of Nature". Keep an eye on www.creativeroyston.org for more details.

